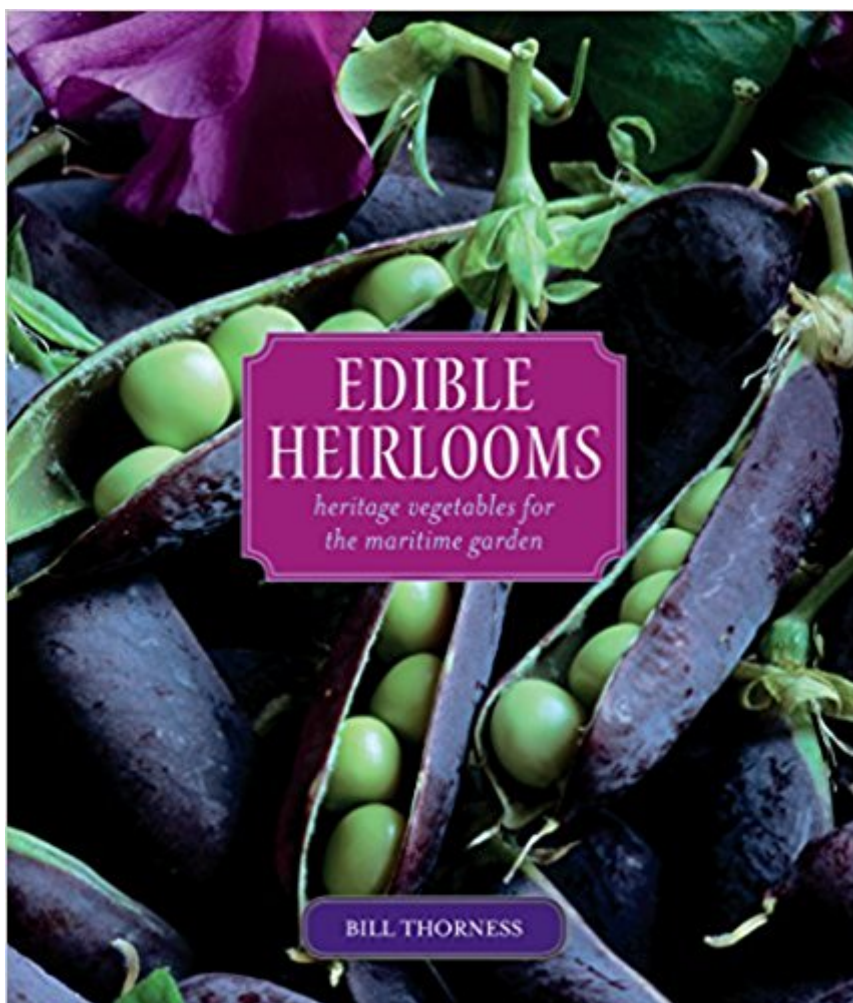


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Edible Heirlooms: Heritage Vegetables For The Maritime Garden



Synopsis

* Features a variety of heirloom vegetables appealing to gourmards and gardeners alike* Growing heirloom plants is the ultimate way to eat local* Scarlet nantes get a lot more looks than the standard orange carrotExploring the need for heirloom plants in the twenty-first century, Edible Heirlooms takes a look at the history and vitality of the heirloom plant, from Russian Red Kale to January King Cabbage. This informative guide collects 26 edible heirloom plants best suited to gardeners in the maritime West-from British Columbia to the San Francisco Bay area -- and provides information on species variety, growing tips, plant history and suggested uses. Chapters contain instructions on how to save your own seeds, and suggestions for starting a seed exchange among friends or a community garden in your neighborhood.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Fascinating and inspiring reading for the novice and experienced gardener alike." (Donna Chuckanut Reader)Thorness explores the need for heirloom plants in this century, including the history and vigor of heirloom plants, the local food movement and the importance of seed-saving and sharing. His concentration is on twenty-six edible heirlooms, including description, cultivation, harvest and storage. (Washington Reads, Washington State Library)This diminutive and attractively illustrated book covers heirloom vegetables and their culture in an easy-to-understand format. (Keith Crotz The American Gardener)

BILL THORNESS is the author of Biking Puget Sound as well as a prolific gardening writer. His

work has appeared in the Seattle Times, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Seattle Metropolitan and more. He is the editor of the Seattle Tilth newsletter and served as president of Seattle Tilth's board of directors. He lives with his wife in Seattle, Washington.

This book is a real boon to those of us who live near the coast in the Pacific Northwest. Everything I've planted here has done very poorly due to the marine layer blocking so much of the sunlight, even in the summer, and I'm looking forward to trying the varieties of plants that supposedly do well in these conditions.

Several months ago I decided that our family needed our own vegetable garden. After consulting with multiple foodies and experienced vegetable gardeners the two books that came up on multiple occasions were Solomon's "Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades" and "Edible Heirlooms" by Bill Thorness. Thorness, a Seattleite, starts off this guide book with a bit of philosophy on why heirlooms are needed in the twenty-first century, including his definition of an heirloom, "First, it has been grown by previous generations since at least before World War II, after which commercial hybridization and long-distance produce shipping really took off. Second, the cultivar is not in broad commercial distribution today. Third, it is open-pollinated, which means that the seed is produced by natural, random pollination, rather than by controlled methods, as is done to create hybrids. Finally, for inclusion in the book, I chose plants for which seed is still regularly available..." He also touches the local food movement and the importance of seed-saving and exchanges which he weaves in throughout the entire book. In the end, though, the main thrust of this book is its guide to twenty-six edible heirlooms from arugula, beets, broccoli, chard and leeks, to garlic, potatoes, onions and peppers just to name a few. Each vegetable is conveniently broken down into its description, cultivation, harvest and storage, seed saving and varieties. Thorness offers useful information and tips for each variety like whether to start from seed or transplant, spacing in the garden, winterizing, etc. After reading through the book once I know that I'll be coming back constantly as I plan, plant and cultivate my own vegetable garden. There's no doubt that Thorness has created a valuable resource that should be on the shelf of every Maritime vegetable gardener.

Disclaimers first. If you're looking for the complete, encyclopedic compendium of all things related to growing Heirloom vegetables, this isn't it. However, if you're looking for a great introduction to a marvelous range of heirlooms specifically suited to a maritime environment, particularly the microclimate of such an environment in the Pacific Northwest, this is it! What's so different about this

area? Start with three months of no sun during many winters. Add to that places along the coast where the fog rolls in from the ocean and down from the mountains, creating a one mile spit of land with light for several months a year. Combine a temperate climate that is almost always moist and rarely hot and you have the ideal environment for slugs and bugs, as well as various other molds and fungi. If you're willing to carve out the space to grow your own food in the midst of that environment, then this book is for you. The author carefully details the cream of the heirloom options for this area, with background on where it came from, germination and planting, the tending as it grows, and even what to do with it as it is brought to the dinner table. Along the way you'll be given a great introduction to sources for seeds and saving your own seeds, among many other gems found in reading this marvelous little book. Get it! Read it! Use it!

I received this book as a gift so I didn't have time to peruse in a bookstore or online before making a decision but I have been very impressed so far. After some basics in the first few chapters the book is organized in alphabetical by vegetable. There is a little bit of history and information about where the plant came from and usually a nice color ink drawing. For the hands on growing parts it starts from the beginning and guides you through to the end of the season where it even gives guidance for how to ensure the soil is rich and prepared for next season. There is also a section on saving seeds for each vegetable I've read about. Given the author is from Seattle it also gives some very pertinent advice for growing in the Pacific Northwest which is pertinent to my garden in Vancouver, BC. The season is still early so we'll see how the garden turns out at the end of the season.

Although I do my gardening here in Texas I found this book very useful. Although the book's focus is primarily on vegetables suited to a cooler damper climate than we have here in Texas [especially in the summer] many of them can be grown during the winter here. What I especially liked about the book was its organization. Each vegetable is first introduced and then advice is given in turn on its cultivation, harvest and storage, seed saving, and we are given a tip--example growing onions between rows of radishes to repel insects. And finally we are given a list of suggested varieties of each vegetable. Also the book is well indexed and there is a bibliography and a list of seed companies and seed saver networks.

Edible Heirlooms is great in that it is specific for the Northwest, but the print uses hard to see colours and is of a small size make it hard to read if your eyes are subpar or if you have color vision issues. Also, lots of white margins that could have been better used for more pictures of the veggies so one

can recognize them, and/or info. All in all, a good addition to the library of a Northwestern gardeners (especially if you do not like to use the web). Would make a good (and attractive) present for someone who wants to get into gardening in the PNW, or who YOU want to get into gardening in the PNW. For beginners, more explanations of terminology would be helpful. Somewhat overpriced considering the lack of pictures and the small size of the book.

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